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MATSUI SECURES \$3.5 MILLION FOR I-5 DECKING PROJECT

Part of \$10.75 million for Sacramento transportation projects approved by Congress

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Robert Matsui (D-Sacramento) announced today that the U.S. House and Senate passed a fiscal year 2002 Transportation Appropriations bill that contained \$10.75 million for Sacramento Transportation projects, including a big grant for the Sacramento Downtown to the Riverfront Reconnection Project.

The bill includes \$3.5 million for environmental and engineering reviews for a project to cover the I-5 corridor and take the first significant step toward realizing the long-term goal of reconnecting downtown Sacramento to the waterfront. The project has long enjoyed support from downtown business and cultural leaders, but this bill marks the first significant infusion of funds for the endeavor. The funds, available immediately upon the bill's enactment with the President's signature, will be used to undertake preliminary engineering and environmental reviews – essential first steps to decking the highway.

"This makes reconnecting downtown Sacramento to the river a reality," said Matsui. "Connecting downtown to the waterfront opens up exciting business, entertainment and cultural possibilities for the city. It is the cornerstone of our efforts on downtown growth and economic development."

The I-5 freeway deck project will create over two blocks of continuous space that could be used for varied development. The project is similar to initiatives to revitalize downtown business centers being undertaken in cities like Duluth, MN, Hartford, CT, Cincinnati, OH, and Boston, MA.

The bill also includes \$3 million – more than double last year's level – for improvements to congested intersections. The funds are designed to provide 'smart transportation systems,' which will enhance traffic monitoring capabilities on busy corridors. The project targets Watt Avenue, Arden Way, and Sunrise/Greenback.

Sacramento will receive \$2 million – double last year's funding – to implement transportation programs serving low employment areas. "Regions that suffer from low employment should not be left on the margins," explained Matsui. "By bringing transportation options, we facilitate access to jobs, education, and area businesses."

The bill also included \$1 million to buy more environmental friendly Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses, replacing those that run on diesel, and to begin design studies for new satellite bus maintenance facility to serve the expanded fleet.

The bill also includes \$1.25 million for the California High Speed Rail Authority. Matsui rallied support on the House side for Senator Dianne Feinstein's (D-CA) effort to include federal funding for an environmental impact statement. "I'm pleased that we are moving forward with high speed rail," said Matsui. "It will revolutionize the way people travel through our state, make Sacramento more accessible, and reduce pollution."

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